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Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services: my name is Rachael Haskell, and I live in Portland, Maine.

I am speaking today because I am concerned for the well-being of the most vulnerable Mainers. In particular, I am concerned about the proposed restriction of general assistance funding. General Assistance is important for helping the housing crisis, as it helps to address the current large gap in services. I myself cannot afford housing despite working three jobs, being in school full time, and working in an internship. With the long waitlist for Section 8 and the limited timeframe of my program, Section 8 would likely not be a viable option for me. Luckily, I am fortunate enough to have my parents' assistance, as they house me while I am in graduate school. However, if I did not have this support, as many do not, I would be at high risk of being homeless due to the lack of available affordable housing and services to address that lack. We must do whatever we can to make affordable housing available to all as quickly as we can, and maintaining the use of general assistance to that end is one vital step in doing so. We have a housing crisis: myself and many other Mainers I know have struggled with housing. An urgent need requires an urgent answer—one that existing systems alone cannot support. General assistance is one step in addressing the housing crisis: there are more that are needed, but removing this aid would be a mistake with dire consequences. We need to be adding supports, not taking them away. For this reason, I am speaking here today. Thank you for your time and attention.